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To Review The CIA

Although it is not new, the proposal of Senator McCarthy of Minnesota for a special Senate committee to investigate the Central Intelligence Agency has more urgency than ever.

McCarthy plans to introduce a resolution next year to establish a nine-man committee to review CIA operations during 1966 and report to Congress early in 1967. There has never been a formal legislative check on CIA activities, as McCarthy noted, and so "it has not been possible to determine the validity of criticisms or to prevent distortions or to dispel rumors."

The Minnesota senator cited "serious questions" about the agency's operations in the Dominican Republic, Viet Nam, Cuba and other world tension spots. The criticism is that the CIA goes much farther than merely gathering and evaluating intelligence, its statutory purpose, and engages in all sorts of subversive activities, functioning in a free-wheeling fashion and spending millions to achieve aims not always consistent with U.S. policy.

In a Senate speech several weeks ago Senator Young of Ohio charged that the CIA has been making foreign policy and "has gradually taken on the character of

an invisible government." He also advocated a monitoring committee. Senators Morse and Gruening have taken similar positions. In 1956 Senator Mansfield introduced a bill for a watchdog committee, but it was defeated 59 to 27.

It is disturbing, of course, that the CIA should be laying itself open to such Senate charges, but it is perhaps even more disturbing that so many examples of its bungling leak out — as in the Bay of Pigs, the U-2 incident and the botched attempt in Singapore in 1961 to buy secrets on Communist China, for which Secretary Rusk had to apologize.

The last three administrations have resisted congressional efforts to examine the CIA, preferring review by a civilian panel appointed by the President. But this is not satisfactory to the public. The elected representatives of the people ought to know more about this secret agency that spends a hidden sum estimated at a billion dollars a year. The CIA does not want congressional review, of course, but its own suspected or known activities are now such as to make this mandatory. Senator McCarthy's resolution should receive strong support.